Scene Break

Love Potion No. 9

Nearly a decade after first challenging the local scene, the Pikes Peak Lavender Film Festival sticks to the plan

By Jill Thomas

When the Pikes Peak Lavender Film Festival first lit up movie screens here, "the town had a horrible reputation around the world in the gay community," remembers festival director Alma Cremonesi. When you mentioned Colorado Springs, she says, talk immediately turned to the notorious Amendment 2 or Focus on the Family.

"It was heartbreaking to us, as LGBT [lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender] people, to see what was happening here, because this had been one of the warmest, nicest places you'd ever want to live during the '60s and '70s," she says. "Everybody was interested in you, and embraced you, and encouraged you to be part of the community. And then all of a sudden, we were inundated by this terrible hatred — and we wanted to do something about that."

CAPSULE

Pikes Peak Lavender Film Festival

CC's Armstrong Hall, 14 E. Cache la Poudre St., and CC's Cornerstone Arts Center, 825 N. Nevada Ave.

Friday, Sept. 19, through Sunday, Sept. 21

Tickets: $5-$10/individual ticket; $20-$75/festival pass, available in advance or at the door. Visit ppliff.org for all pre-sale locations.

What they did was create a festival they hoped would not only entertain, but educate. This year that hope continues as the three-day festival brings nine feature films and nine shorts to Colorado College's Armstrong Hall and Cornerstone Arts Center.

"First, I hope that LGBT people will feel validated," says Cremonesi. "And secondly, I hope they learn just how many friends we have in Colorado Springs."

For straight viewers, Cremonesi hopes the films can help them see LGBT people more fully.

"Years ago, if there was a gay character in a movie, he usually was swishy and had a high voice, those kinds of things," she says. "Now if you watch the films in the Pikes Peak Lavender Film Festival, you see the complexity of human beings and you see the complexity of gay people."

Cremonesi points to a variety of factors influencing these changes — from films like *Brokeback Mountain* to people like Mike Jones, who outed New Life Church founder Ted Haggard.

"For people who are kind of on the edge — who don't necessarily embrace gay people, but who want to understand more — this is a good place to start," she says.

What they'll find at the festival are a variety of films from the U.S. and a couple foreign countries that include LGBT characters ranging from school-age kids to adults, from cheerleaders to religious leaders.

"In some of the films, the lesbian or the gay man is central to the story, and sometimes they're just very peripheral," says Cremonesi, who laughs as she adds, "A lot of people thought we were showing porn when we first started. Because whenever you say 'gay' or 'lesbian,' they think of sex. But of course, that's not the case at all. These really are films with a lot of taste."

But good taste doesn't preclude partying, and Cremonesi says the festival will offer plenty of that as well. In addition to Q&As with filmmakers and cast members, the festival will feature an opening-night reception with food, wine and beer, plus after-parties on Saturday at the Underground (110 N. Nevada Ave.) and Sunday at Metropolis (1201 W. Colorado Ave.).

"That Colorado Springs hosts the longest-running LGBT film festival in Colorado makes a difference," says Cremonesi. "So if you feel strongly about that — that you wish Colorado Springs had a more balanced or better image — then this might be something you want to support and enjoy."

— jill@csindy.com

In Ready? OK! *Lurie Poston hopes to measure up as a cheerleader.*

Aromatherapy

Five Lavender flicks in which you can immerse yourself

Steam

Friday, Sept. 19, 8 p.m.

Steam, the festival's opening night feature, tells three stories, each spotlighting a woman at a different life juncture. There's a college-aged lesbian (Kate Siegel) struggling to break from her controlling family, a woman at midlife (Ally Sheedy) finding new strength (and a younger boyfriend) following a divorce, and an older woman (Ruby Dee) finding love again after the death of her husband. The stories intersect only when the women meet to unwind in the same steam room, but they work together because of their shared theme of transition. At two hours, *Steam* runs a tad long, but uses the time to bring each story to a satisfying conclusion.

The Sensei

Saturday, Sept. 20, 3:45 p.m.

As the festival's only Colorado-made movie, *The Sensei* does its best to represent. Much in this deeply sincere film will feel familiar to locals. It's set in a tiny Colorado town amidst the AIDS hysteria of the '80s, and follows a gay teenager (Mike O'Laskey) who's beaten by local rednecks. When the town's karate studio declines his application, he secretly goes into training with a martial arts master (D. Lee Inosanto, also the writer and director) who's been similarly rejected because she's a woman. The picture tends toward overexplanation, and its opening and closing sequences feel forced, but much of the rest rings true.

Call Me Troy

Sunday, Sept. 21, noon

Using interviews, archival footage and photos, this inspiring documentary tells the life story of preacher, activist and visionary Troy D. Perry. Following his coming out, a suicide attempt and the realization that he could be gay and be loved by God, the former Pentecostal minister founded the Metropolitan Community Church in 1968. (The denomination's member congregations now number in the hundreds worldwide.) *Call Me Troy* gives a glimpse not only into Perry's personal history and the church's beginning, but also into the history of the gay rights movement, including California's Briggs initiative, Anita Bryant and orange juice, the AIDS crisis, same-sex marriage and more.

Ready? OK!

Sunday, Sept. 21, 2:30 p.m.

Anyone who's ever felt different will appreciate *Ready? OK!*, an utterly enjoyable dramedy about a boy (Lurie Poston) who's convinced he belongs on his Catholic school's cheer squad. While the eternally optimistic 10-year-old never doubts himself despite the nuns' rule book, his stressed-out single mom (Carrie Preston) grapples over his interest. A wayward uncle, a tough-talking grandma and an insightful gay neighbor round out the superb cast. While it may *sound* sappy, writer-director James Vasquez's film manages to be fresh, funny, smart and even a touch edgy. Think *Little Miss Sunshine* meets *Bring It On*. Anyway you flip it, it's F-U-N!

Ruby Blue

Sunday, Sept. 21, 7:45 p.m.

Ruby Blue follows a gruff English widower (Bob Hoskins) fighting regrets and the lure of alcohol after his wife's death. As he struggles with his darker impulses, he finds himself stuck babysitting a neighbor girl, befriending a young street thug and being drawn under the spell of the delightfully buoyant French woman (Josiane Balasko, playing a transsexual) who lives next door. As she coaxes him out of his funk with her cooking, he starts to enjoy the child's company and finds purpose in mentoring the young man. When the lives of the characters converge in a crisis, the film becomes a subtle, yet effective, cautionary tale about the dangers of acting on misconceptions.

— Jill Thomas

3 DIRECTORS WILL ATTEND LAVENDER FILM FES

BY ANDREW WINEKE
THE GAZETTE

Now in its ninth year, the Pikes Peak Lavender Film Festival provides an outlet and voice for local gays and lesbians who often feel lost in a conservative city.

This year, directors and actors from three of the films will attend the festival. There will be a director's luncheon at 11 a.m. Saturday. To give readers a preview, The Gazette spoke with Kyle Schickner ("Steam"), Diana Lee Inosanto ("The Sensei") and Yen Tan ("Ciao") about their films.

Kyle Schickner, "Steam"

Schickner wrote the script for "Steam" more than 10 years ago, when he was in college.

Selling a movie featuring three independent stories about women, two of whom were older than 40, was not an easy road in youth-obsessed Hollywood.

"People said, 'We can't make a movie that tells three female stories,'" Schickner said. "We have to put two or three more sex scenes in there with the hot lesbians. They said, 'Let's get rid of the old-lady story.'"

Schickner wrote the part of Doris with actress Ruby Dee in mind. In the film, Doris is a woman struggling to recover emotionally from the death of her husband. Dee agreed to take the part several years ago, but Schickner assumed it would never happen after the death of her husband, Ossie Davis, in 2005.

"I didn't think there was any way she would ever do this movie," he said. "Especially because it kind of mirrors her life, having a life partner and losing a life partner."

However, Schickner said, "she read this script and she realized that this is what Ossie would want her to do."

Likewise, Schickner initially approached Ally Sheedy about playing a supporting role. Sheedy loved the part of Laurie, going so far as insisting on playing the role as a 42-year-old woman — several years older than Schickner had written the part to be.

HEITMANN ENTERTAINMENT

Diana Lee Inosanto, left, and Michael O'Laskey star in "The Sensei," which Inosanto also directed. She will attend the screening of her film, set in Colorado.

details

PIKES PEAK LAVENDER FILM FESTIVAL

When: Today-Sunday

Where: Colorado College – Armstrong Hall, 14 E. Cache La Poudre St.; Cornerstone Arts Center, 825 N. Cascade Ave.

Tickets: Festival pass $75; half-pass $50; four-film pass $35; opening-night pass $25; individual tickets $10; at Pikes Peak Gay & Lesbian Community Center (2506 E. Bijou St.), The Underground (110 N. Nevada Ave.) and Spice of Life (727 Manitou Ave., Manitou Springs); 386-6843 or ppliff.org.

"It's refreshing to see that sort of attitude," Schickner said. "We didn't glam her up at all, in fact, perhaps the opposite."

"Steam" has been a crowd-pleaser at festivals, Schickner said. That's a huge relief, he said, because he was never sure when he made the film that he'd really nailed the woman's perspective.

"As a white male writing this stuff I'd been nervous — what if I didn't get it right? What if women don't relate to it?" he said. "I was worried that my ego was superseding my caution for writing stories that aren't in my wheelhouse."

Diana Lee Inosanto, "The Sensei"

A fictional small town on the Colorado prairie is the setting for Inosanto's atypical take on the martial arts film, "The Sensei."

Set mostly in the 1980s, "The Sensei" features a gay protagonist, a woman martial arts master (Inosanto herself), and touches on serious issues including racism and the AIDS epidemic. And while that seems like a lot to stuff into one movie, Inosanto said most of the film reflects things that happened to her family.

"I was kind of playing around with what I saw in my own family and what happened to Matthew Shepard," she said, referring to the gay Wyoming college student who was attacked and killed in 1998.

A longtime Hollywood stuntwoman and the goddaughter of martial arts legend Bruce Lee, Inosanto had plenty of experience with movies, but few chances at the kind of films she really wanted to make.

"I've always known since I was a kid that I wanted to participate in a humanitarian-type film," she said. "Unfortunately,

SEE LAVENDER • PAGE 5

details

FILM FEST SCHEDULE

TODAY
Armstrong Hall
6 p.m. – reception.
8 p.m. – "How Do I Say This? I'm G (USA, 2007, 5 minutes)
"Steam" (USA, 2007, 2 hours). Direct Kyle Schickner and actress Kate Sieg will attend.

SATURDAY
Fine Arts Center, 30 W. Dale St.
11 a.m. – Filmmakers luncheon, Café

Cornerstone Arts Center
12:45 p.m. – "Look Again" (USA, 2 7 minutes)
"The Edge of Heaven (Auf der ande Seite)" (Germany, 2007, 2 hours, 2 mi
3:45 p.m. – "By the Way Bob," (U 2007, 5 minutes)
"The Sensei," (USA, 2007, 1 hour, 43 minutes). Director Diana Lee Inosant attend.

Armstrong Hall
6:15 p.m. – "Happenstance," (USA 2007, 8 minutes)
"Tru Loved," (USA, 2008, 1 hour, 39 minutes)
8:30 p.m. – "Pat's First Kiss," (Ca 2007, 4 minutes)
"Ciao," (USA, 2007, 1 hour, 27 minut Director Yen Tan will attend.

SUNDAY
Cornerstone Arts Center
Noon – "Hello, My Name Is Herm (Canada, 2007, 10 minutes)
"Call Me Troy," (USA, 2007, 1 hour, 4 minutes)
2:30 p.m. – "Babysitting Andy," (Canada, 2007, 11 minutes)
"Ready? OK!" (USA, 2008, 1 hour, 3 minutes)

Armstrong Hall
5 p.m. – "Sunspots," (USA, 2008, 1 minutes)
"The World Unseen," (UK, 2007, 1 h 43 minutes)
7:45 p.m. – "No Bikini," (Canada, 2 9 minutes)
"Ruby Blue," (UK, 2007, 1 hour, 48 minutes)